



CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS
Serving the 5th Congressional District of Georgia

FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) ABOUT IMMIGRATION AND COVID-19

Below, you will find answers to frequently-asked questions about immigration during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

[Please contact my office with additional questions about your case.](#) You may also visit the agency websites for more information about how they are handling specific processes.

- [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#)
- [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\)](#)
- [U.S. Department of State](#)
- [U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\)](#)

This factsheet covers:

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Interviews with USCIS

How will the closure of offices affect my application if an interview is required?

USCIS domestic field offices will send notices with instructions to applicants and petitioners with scheduled interview appointments impacted by this closure. Appointments will automatically be rescheduled once normal operations resume. Individuals who had InfoPass appointments with a Field Office must reschedule through the [USCIS Contact Center](#).

What if my extension of my Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is set to expire before I have an interview?

Applicants who had an appointment scheduled with an Application Support Center (ASC) after the ASC closure on March 18, 2020, or who have filed a Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, extension will have their application processed using previously submitted biometrics. This announcement is consistent with existing USCIS authorities regarding the

agency's ability to reuse previously submitted biometrics. This will remain in effect until ASCs resume normal operations. (<https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/uscis-response-covid-19>)

When will my naturalization ceremony take place?

USCIS will automatically reschedule your ceremony and you will be notified by mail. If you do not receive a notice within 90 days, please reach out to the [USCIS Contact Center](#). In certain limited situations, USCIS may be able to perform small naturalization ceremonies for limited numbers of applicants, when feasible and all appropriate precautions can be taken. Applicants who are requesting a name change must wait for a judicial ceremony.

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Repayment of State Department Promissory Notes

When will I receive my bill for evacuation?

Due to the unprecedented number of repatriation loans, you may not receive your bill for several months. In a typical year, the Department of State processes well under 1,000 promissory notes and repatriation loans. This year, the Department anticipates more than 30,000 notes and loans. For these reasons, the billing process may be slower, and you should closely monitor your mail.

Where will my bill be sent?

After returning home, you will receive a bill at the address provided in the promissory note or at the address listed in your passport records.

When is my bill due?

Your billing notice will include the due date. It will also include:

- contact information for the Department's Accounts Receivable office;
- methods for repayment; and
- further rights for review.

Please note, the repayment clock for your bill only begins when the State Department sends your bill.

What if I am not able to pay this bill?

If you are not able to pay the full amount, you will have the option to enter into an Installment Agreement with demonstrated financial hardship. Amounts not collected through this process are forwarded to the Department of Treasury for collection.

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Passports

Below are some frequently asked questions from the Department of State's passport website. For more information, please visit [this FAQ page](#).

Is it possible to get a passport?

To limit the spread of COVID-19, the Atlanta Passport Agency is only able to offer service for customers with a qualified life-or-death emergency and need a passport for immediate international travel within 72 hours. Life-or-death emergencies are serious illnesses, injuries, or deaths in your immediate family (e.g., parent, child, spouse, sibling, aunt, uncle, etc.) that require you to travel outside the United States within 72 hours.

You must provide:

- A passport application with supporting documents (e.g., citizenship evidence, ID, etc.)
- Proof of the life-or-death emergency such as a death certificate, a statement from a mortuary, or a signed letter from a hospital or medical professional. Documents must be translated or in English.
- Proof of international travel (e.g., reservation, ticket, itinerary)

For more information, please contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC). Please call 1-877-487-2778 (1-888-874-7793 TDD/TTY). Agents are available Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST, or on Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. EST.

What are your plans to offer more passport services?

The Department intends to resume routine passport processing in phases, while protecting the safety of both staff and customers. The Department is closely monitoring the local and regional conditions where passport agencies and centers are located. The local circumstances, which will affect the timing of when offices reopen, include medical infrastructure, COVID-19 cases, emergency response capabilities, and restrictions on leaving home.

How long will it take for me to receive my passport?

Passport agencies continue to face significant delays in passport processing. As additional employees return to facilities, there is an aggressive push to address a high volume of pending applications from customers who applied before and after limited passport operations began in March. To see the current wait times to receive your passport, please visit the Department's [Processing Times](#) page.

Can I expedite my passport?

No. Expedited service was suspended in March. Applications cannot be upgraded to expedite service at this time. Expedited service will not be offered until the State Department resumes normal operations. More information is available [here](#).

What are some general tips for Americans who are traveling or living abroad?

- If you are leaving the United States, please enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/> to receive alerts and be located in an emergency.
- **In Case of an Emergency Overseas:** Please call 1 (888) 407-4747 (U.S. and Canada) or 1 (202) 501-4444 (overseas) or contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate: <https://www.usembassy.gov/>.
- **U.S. Government Resources:** For more information, please visit [Coronavirus.gov](https://coronavirus.gov), [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus), and [USA.gov/Coronavirus](https://usa.gov/coronavirus).

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International Adoptions

Can I complete my international adoption at this time?

The Department of State has issued a [Level 4 Global Health Advisory](#) urging U.S. citizens not to travel internationally at this time. Prospective adoptive parents are encouraged to delay all

international travel until the current COVID-19 concerns have been resolved. Regarding adoption-based travel, the Office of Children's Issues [published guidance](#) on where to review information about country-specific developments, including quarantines, travel restrictions, border closings, and consular operations. For immediate concerns on immigration through adoption, please reference the [USCIS website](#).

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Student Visas

How does the administration's April 24th immigration order affect me?

Nonimmigrant visa holders (like international students on an F-1 or J-1 visa) are not included in the entry restrictions of the proclamation. *Please contact your institution for more information about visa requirements.*

If I have an F-1 visa, can I work off campus?

USCIS offers employment authorization to work off-campus for those individuals, who are suffering severe economic hardship with F-1 visa status. More information is available here: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/special-situations>

What if I need to extend or overstay my visa because of COVID-19 circumstances beyond my control, such as the border of my home country being closed?

Generally, nonimmigrants must leave the United States before expiration of their visa. However, especially due to COVID-19, nonimmigrants may unexpectedly need to remain in the United States. You may be able to apply to mitigate the immigration consequences of COVID-19 by timely filing an application for extension of stay (EOS) or change in status (COS). USCIS continues to accept and process applications and petitions, and many forms are available for online filing. [Please visit USCIS for more details.](#)

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Foreign Workers and Visitors

What happens if I am terminated due to COVID?

Federal regulations allow E-1, E-2, E-3, H-1B, H-1B1, L-1, O-1 or TN nonimmigrant workers a grace period of up to 60 days based upon the date their employment ends. The length of the grace period is either 60 consecutive days or until the end of the worker's current authorized validity period, whichever is shorter. The grace period gives the worker time either to find other employment with an employer who can file an extension or change of status within 60 days or to leave the United States. Similarly, the worker could also potentially change to a different visa during the grace period, such as enrolling in a school and acquiring an F-1 visa.

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How will COVID-19 affect processing times?

Petitioners should expect a delay in data entry and receipt notice generation for fiscal year 2021 H-1B cap-subject petitions until at least May 1, 2020, due to the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19). On March 20, 2020, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced the immediate and [temporary suspension of premium processing service](#) for all Form I-129 and I-140 petitions until further notice due to Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). (**Update 6/26:** USCIS has resumed premium processing for certain workers; more information is available [here](#), and my staff is available to answer any questions you might have.)

On May 12, 2020, the Department of Homeland Security published a [temporary final rule to change certain H-2B requirements](#) to help secure the U.S. food supply chain and reduce the economic impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency on H-2B employers. The temporary flexibilities are available through September 11, 2020.

Can I seek unemployment benefits?

In general, legal immigrants can receive unemployment if they are authorized the work at the job they held and are authorized to work while receiving unemployment compensation. If your visa was tied to a specific job, you might be ineligible for unemployment benefits. Please contact the [Georgia Department of Labor](#) for more information.

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Administration's Immigration Orders

How does the administration's April 24, 2020, immigration order affect me?

Those people subject to the order include any individual seeking to enter the U.S. as an immigrant, who:

- Was outside the United States on April 24, 2020;
- Did not have a valid immigrant visa on April 24, 2020; and
- Did not have a valid official travel document (such as a transportation letter, boarding foil, or advance parole document) on April 24, 2020, or one issued on any date thereafter that permits travel to the United States to seek entry or admission.

Those excluded from the order include lawful permanent residents (i.e., green card holders), medical workers and their families, spouses and children of U.S. citizens, members of the U.S. military, non-immigrants, and asylum seekers. [A full list of exceptions is available on my website.](#)

How does the administration's June 23, 2020, immigration order affect me?

The June 23 order extends the April 24 order and bans foreign nationals on H-1B, H-2B, J-1, and L-1 visas, and any accompanying spouses and children, from entering the United States.

The ban only applies if the foreign national is:

- Outside the United States on June 24.

- Does not have a nonimmigrant visa valid on June 24.
- Does not have an official travel document other than a visa valid on June 24 or issued later that permits the person to be admitted to the United States.

Lawful permanent residents, spouses or children of U.S. citizens, and temporary food workers are exempt from the ban. The government may also provide national interest exemptions to those critical to national security or economic recovery, health care workers, and certain children.

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Stimulus Checks for Immigrants

Are immigrants eligible for stimulus checks under the CARES Act?

The CARES Act provides a one-time rebate payment of \$1,200 for each adult and an additional \$500 for each child dependent. Those individuals with a valid Social Security number have or will receive a rebate.

I am an American citizen married to an undocumented person. Why have I not received a check?

Many undocumented people file taxes using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). Unfortunately, the CARES Act specifically requires taxpayers to have a Social Security number in order to receive economic impact payments. I strongly opposed the Senate Republicans' insistence on including this restriction in the CARES Act. The Social Security requirement means that American citizens, who are married to undocumented taxpayers and file jointly, have not received their economic impact payment (EIP).

Is Congress taking steps to expand eligibility for these payments?

As chair of the House Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee, I am working to make sure that money does reach Americans, including U.S. citizen children of undocumented people. I also support policies to to expand eligibility for these payments to taxpayers who use an ITIN when filing their returns.

In May 2020, the House passed H.R. 6800, the HEROES Act, which fixes this injustice by using ITINs process taxpayers' rebate payments. The bill awaits action in the Senate.

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Trusted Traveler Programs (PreCheck, Global Entry, etc.)

Are enrollment centers open?

As U.S. Customs and Border Protection works toward a phased reintegration of pre-COVID-19 activities, Trusted Traveler Program Enrollment Centers will remain closed until at least July 6, 2020.

What if I need to renew my PreCheck or Global Entry?

All members are eligible to initiate and submit their renewal applications as early as one year before their expiration date, the responsibility to submit their renewal application in a timely manner rests solely with the member.